

## **The Dreams (Or Vision)**

“I was branded notorious for dreaming, by one and all, right from beginning of my youth. I too, thought the dreams do not materialise, neither did others. But many astonishing things did happen and I am tempted to share it because no one believed it. They didn’t materialise as I dreamt, but in slightly modified ways as per the design of almighty.” said a smiling Dr. Kulkarni to a young friend, while sharing the latest figures of PGP intake in IIMs, which had neared 5000, over 3 times the figure of about 1700 in 2008, precisely matching the figure he had dreamt a decade ago. The topic cropped up when Dr. Kulkarni was narrating his new work on strategic benefits of course material development for management education.

### **Dream V: Writing from ICU/ Bed**

For 25 years I tried to write a book on management of change, as a part of course material for my students of strategic management. I wrote but in parts; because when I completed a part of text, I wanted to have some illustrative case. When I wrote the case, I got new ideas to incorporate. By the time I completed that, I found new points to be illustrated. Thus time passed and after 25 years I retired. The dream of writing “that Dream book” was thus buried.

After retirement I faced number of ailments one after another, including two operations. I was confined to home and bed. I could neither travel, nor go out, nor write nor see properly. By the grace of god I met a magneto-therapist. Though still not fully recovered, I started writing bits of pieces here and there, whenever I could not sleep at night. Gradually I was able to consolidate my past works and case studies and added a few. Twenty five years ago we had seen a dream of establishing Academic Resource Park, to meet the requirements of course material, which could not take off. However in two years’ time I was able to complete a short and simple text book, a case book, a book of short-expandable cases (in six international languages), a book on Case Analysis, a Book on Case Method (all for students, managers and teachers/ trainers) and a Research Book, all related to strategic management. The text of management of change got integrated into it. The books were self- published, to contain cost and allow even free usage in deserving cases.

I could not believe that all that I wanted to do in my 25 years tenure at IIMs, could see light of the day 6 years after I retire. “Better late than never. The experiences may benefit the end user some time when India decides against inward globalisation. If the Academic Resource Park had taken off. Perhaps with over 700 faculty members, IIMs could have taken care of the requirements of course material for management education on an on-going basis, as visualised” said Dr. Kulkarni

## **Dream IV: PGP Intake in IIMs Going 6-fold**

I was lucky enough to get associated in the development of Detailed Project Report for establishment of 6 new IIMs in 2008. IIMs had been very slow in expending PGP intake. Up to 2002, the total intake in PGP was 840. A standoff between MHRD and IIMs led to increase in PGP by one section each in 2003-04. But then again they started stagnating at 240 batch size. MHRD had to bring OBC quota reservation in 2007-08, which compelled them to increase the size by 54% of 2006-07 intake.

With the experience gained at IMX and IMP, I was sure the mind gets set to certain figures. The mind set is difficult to mould. In writing the report we felt that IIMs as bench mark institutions should cater to at least 10% of the aspiring candidates. There were over 250000 CAT applicants for 2008-09 session. Assuming that at least 20% of them were genuinely interested and capable to pursue management education, it required the seats to be increased to somewhere in the range of 5000. Adding to the existing intake of about 1700 in 2008, we hovered around the additional intake of about 3200 in next 10 years and recommended accordingly. New IIMs came up faster and added close to 1500 in about 7-8 years (2010-2018) period, compared to 1700 by older IIMs over 30-50 years. Another 800+ were added by second generation IIMs (IIMK & IIMI) over 20 years.

An interesting thing happened in the meantime. In June 2012, I was asked to make a presentation to MHRD. While displaying the location map of existing IIMs, the Hon’ble Minister inquisitively asked why there was no IIM in Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa etc. I politely told “Sir, this question is to be answered by you, I am only displaying what exists”. What transpired later, I don’t know. But in 2014, the MHRD under NDA government announced six more new IIMs to be launched. In just about 4 years only, by 2018, these new IIMs added close to 700+ seats in PGP, taking the total to about **4700** in 2018 from **1700** in 2008-09 and **840** in

2002-03, *almost 6-fold rise over last 15 years*, a growth dream that I will always relish.

If the intake in long duration Executive Programmes of 2 year duration (for which PG Diploma is awarded) is included, the number increases by another 340+ students, taking total beyond **5000**, making the dream come true, *notwithstanding the constraints cited earlier regularly as factors holding the growth of PGP intake.*

### **Dream III: Joining IMP**

All the above dream would not have materialised if I had not got the opportunity to join IMP, one of the youngest IIM, located in the remote southwest corner of India. With different culture, language, food, climate, terrain, 2500 km away from home town, where I had settled for over 20 years, ailing wife and so on. I never thought I would ever go a place from where I had hurriedly returned back home in Gujarat some 20 years ago cutting short my trip from 3 days.

But that institute realised my dreams seen for **IMX**, over eighteen years ago. The PGP intake went up to 180, in its 8<sup>th</sup> batch, fastest among all IIMs, and the Institute surpassed OBC reservation quota requirements in second year itself, making the Institute PGP grow 5-fold in 7 years. **Nowhere in the world such phenomenon had been observed till date.** The doctoral programme started in 10<sup>th</sup> year itself instead of 16<sup>th</sup> year at IMX. Besides, a large number of faculty development programmes started, making IMP as the only major QIP centre of AICTE in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of my stay. The number of conferences also grew and the institute was able to organise 17 conferences in 5 years while I struggled to have one in 5 years at IMX. Nothing of this would have been possible if I did not have this dream for IMX and thought of how to go about doing it.

An added thing was restructuring interactive distance learning (online) programme for working executive, which became pioneer in the country, catering to requirements of managers who could not attend regular, residential management programme. The stay was remarkable for seeing my cherished dreams coming true.

## **Dream II: IIMs Joining Hand for Academic Activities**

The above were not the only dream I had in life. There were others, even weird ones. IIMs rarely conducted joint academic activities. I had been wondering for over 25 years since 1975 “why they could not do it together”. This had been a dream to see some activity jointly done. This dream materialised in 2001 when there was a WTO seminar jointly promoted by four IIMs. It was a big day to see that 5 out of six Directors (one was hospitalised) present during the seminar and actively participating for full two days, each one shouldering some or the other seminar responsibility.

Even bigger events followed. Six IIMs joined hand to start weeklong faculty development programme, along with other leading Institutions like XLRI, IIFT, MDI etc. Never a concerted effort of this kind was seen in the past for grooming faculty of management schools in a critical discipline of Strategic Management, conducting 68 programmes in which over 1700 faculty members participated during 2004-2015 period. All these were low cost, affordable programmes, allowing a good number of faculty members attending the programmes paying registration fee and journey expenses from their own pocket. I had never believed that some day this would be possible because the institute where I spent most part of my life was reluctant to give whole hearted support. Surprise of surprise, all this was possible only on small requests.

The cooperation was not limited to this only. Together these institutions conducted over 22 seminars/ conference in SM area, which no institutions was able to do on its own.

## **Dream I: Giving Quantum Leap to PGP at IMX**

In 1989 something unusual happened. IMX was started with PGP intake of 27 in mid 1980s and continued at that stage for almost 4 years. As the first Chairman Placement I noticed that although we were new still we were able to finish job placement in a week's time, after all the second examinations were over, while many leading institutions were starting earlier and kept the placement window open for 2-3 months. Half the companies were going without a single acceptance and many had started complaining that they will stop coming if they don't get a single person to join. I was getting restless wondering if this resentment continues, by the time we are ready to increase, companies may lose interest in us. The

campus construction was at snail's pace, as grants from MHRD were not coming as required to expedite. So much so that builders sent a letter in early 1989 that they may close down the project office.

Even if the campus was completed, it was dreadful to think of a students population of around 60, faculty and staff strength of about 50, how would we live in a campus of 200 acres of land and with no public transport available to campus about 10 km away from municipal limits. The dream of joining IMX to make it an eminent national institution was nowhere coming true, for which I had planned to move from industry.

But something extraordinary happened. In 1989, the institute increased intake over 3-fold from 34 to 105 in just 4 months' time, February to June. It was like adding FMS of Delhi University to Lucknow University MBA. Indeed, it could have crossed 200 in 1992, making it biggest institution in the country in just 9<sup>th</sup> year of its establishment and put it on a different pedestal altogether. By 2003-04, however it was reckoned at par with 3 other senior IIMs.

The story of giving 3-fold jump is also interesting. In August 1987, we had a faculty council meeting more to grill the director than discuss academic. After the job was done, while we were waiting for tea, a faculty member casually suggested that should not we look at the future. A committee of task heads was constituted, which did not meet. Frustrated, I wrote the report in June 1988 "Shaping the Future", whose 12 pages were devoted to what we would like to be in the next 10 years, and 72 pages detailing of how to be that. It was done typically in the spirit of PGP report. The Committee met, but some members felt that report was too big to read.

However, when the new Director joined the institute was struggling for funds. Right then the MHRD asked for a 10 years perspective plan. The Director came to learn about the report, and based upon it a plan was sent to MHRD. In February 1989, the Director appointed me PGP Chairman to increase the intake to two section. It gave opportunity to increase intake to 105, skipping step of 70 mentioned in the report. Many faculty and staff members were baffled how it will happen. But it did happen with little addition to faculty and no addition to non-teaching staff, and building on improvised infrastructure. It was not just a dream come true but useful experience to give impetus increase PGP intake expeditiously, which helped in IMP.

“I am reminded of Mr. V. Krishnamoorthy, former Chairman of BHEL”. I had an opportunity to interview in 1984 and asked how he shaped growth through Corporate Plan in 1972 onwards. “I had studied different units of BHEL and HEIL, before being given the responsibility. By and large I only executed it when I became CMD”. The report of Committee on Future Directions” turned out to be similar exercise for IMX, but could not be fully implemented. At IMP I was Director and had more lee-way to execute it” smiled Dr. Kulkarni.

“Were all the above Dreams. Do Dreams materialise? Yes and no. They do, but not the way you thought, and perhaps not if you don’t feel excited about them”, concluded Dr. Kulkarni.